

### 3. My First Odissi Dance

10 years, 3 corporate jobs, marriage and 2 babies. These were just some things that had occurred since the last time I was on stage. A lot of water under *that* bridge, many would say. So when, after just a month of learning Odissi, my teacher suggested I join them on stage for a performance, the first thing I wanted to do was laugh out loud. Surely maam, as we lovingly call her, was kidding. Apparently not. She was as serious as a heart attack. And so started the preparations for the dance show which was going to be my first ever Odissi performance on stage.

They say the good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates and the great teacher inspires. My teacher Mrs. Suprava Mishra is a living example of this. Her passion towards Odissi is a source of inspiration to her students. When I first saw her perform in class, I was totally in awe with her zeal and vigour. As for me, the way she strikes a perfect balance between her corporate career, family life and her passion for dance is a great motivator. So with the blessings of our Guru, we endeavoured for our performance.

The production was 'Shivashtak', a paean to Lord Shiva. The ten minute performance is an ode to the qualities exemplified by the great Hindu God. This was to be performed by maam and four other students, including me, on the occasion of 'Utkal Diwas', a celebration of the formation of the state of Odisha as a separate province.

The training was underway weeks before and as the event neared, we would even gather on weekends to give finishing touches to and discuss other aspects of the dance with our teacher. Exhilarating though they were, the rehearsals were also a great opportunity to learn the nuances of the art which our teacher gladly shared with us.

Finally it was the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, Utkal Diwas, the day of our performance. The venue was the Town Hall in Gandhinagar and as I packed and prepared to leave for there, I realised I had butterflies in my stomach. After all, at stake was not only my self belief but also the conviction my teacher.

It was dusk by the time we reached the Town Hall. The atmosphere there was already filled with excitement as team after teams arrived and settled in their green rooms waiting for their turns. While we did a quick race of the stage to check the lightings and our positions I could not help but feel nostalgic reminiscing about my days of collegiate theatre. Being here again after all these years sure felt great! It was now time to get

ready, put on our costumes and makeup. Now I have to confess here that if there was one thing I was more excited about than the dance, it was to see myself in the Odissi dance costume. I had seen my teacher and other performers in their glorious dresses and finery before and could not wait to get into mine. I could barely recognise myself in the mirror once the makeup was done and all I wanted to do now was to be on stage. The anxiety and apprehension were now building up.

At last, the moment arrived. Our group was announced and before my baffled mind could register anything, we were already on stage. For all the gruelling hours and days of rehearsals, the actual show felt not like the 10 minutes it really lasted but more like a flash second. It was over before I realised we were actually doing it! Only when I heard the applause did it sink in that I had performed my first ever Odissi dance on stage in front of a live audience! Of course that my husband and daughter were a part of that applauding audience was only a very delicious icing on the cake!!!

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